



AGENDA ITEM #: 14

DATE OF MEETING: July 20, 2006

ACTION: _____

DISCUSSION: X

PROJECT TITLE: Prenatal to Three

A. SUMMARY

First 5 California has made significant investments in the prenatal to five population over the past six years. In addition to making a large investment in school readiness for children prenatal to five and their families, First 5 California has also made a sizeable investment in demonstrating universal preschool, special needs children, oral health and health access. With the implementation of the Power of Preschool program for children four years of age (or 3- and 4-year-olds) we now want to more fully explore how best to serve and support the needs of children prenatal to three and their families.

During the January 2006 Strategic Planning Meeting, the Commission expressed interest in future investment in programs specifically targeting children age 0-3. This presentation provides a current overview of issues impacting children prenatal to age three, and their families. We will present best practices and discuss effective ways to focus potential future investments in the prenatal to three arena at the October 2006 Commission Meeting.

B. BACKGROUND/HISTORY:

The School Readiness (SR) Program is the centerpiece of First 5 California's work with children 0-5 and their families. Jointly funded by the State and County Commissions at \$100 million per year, the purpose of the SR Program is to improve the ability of families, schools, and communities to prepare children to enter school ready to succeed. First 5 California funds a total of 206 local programs in 58 counties. A primary function of SR Programs is to coordinate the effective delivery of quality services and supports for California's youngest children (0-5) and their families.

In July 2003, First 5 California invested \$100 million in its Power of Preschool (PoP) Program, leading efforts to help make sure that all children ages 3 and 4 in California have equal access to quality preschool programs. The program's goal is to increase the number of high-quality preschool spaces for children in California,



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while at the same time providing demonstration projects in different parts of the state to help guide efforts to create a statewide preschool system. PoP is a high-quality, free, voluntary, part-day preschool program for all 4-year-olds (or 3- and 4-year-olds).

Subsequent to making the preschool investment for children at the three- to five-year-old end of the spectrum, it became evident that a prenatal to three investment should also be explored. At the January 2006 Planning Meeting, State Commissioners expressed an interest in exploring a statewide initiative to address the specific needs of children 0-3 and their families. During the meeting a number of ideas were discussed and State staff were asked to develop informational presentations for State Commission meetings during the remainder of the 2006 calendar year and prepare a slate of concepts for the Commissioners' consideration and response at the January 2007 Planning Meeting.

C. EXPERT PANEL

Pursuant to this request, State staff contacted the Zero to Three (ZTT) organization to provide an overview of the prenatal to three landscape to set the stage for future State Commissioner discussions on this topic. Cindy Oser, R.N., M.S., Director, and Florence Nelson, Ph.D., Senior Policy Associate at the Zero to Three Western Office will be presenting.

ZTT is nationally recognized for their work on behalf of the nation's youngest children. Their work is based on a mission "to support the healthy development and well-being of infants, toddlers and their families." ZTT is a national, nonprofit, multidisciplinary organization that advances their mission by informing, educating and supporting adults who influence the lives of infants and toddlers. Core to ZTT is their Policy Center, which is a research-based, non-partisan effort that "brings the voice of babies and toddlers to public policy to promote good health, strong families, and positive early learning experiences."

The October 2006 State Commission meeting will include a panel presentation from representatives of County Commissions and other partner organizations who are currently engaged in the funding and/or implementation of prenatal to three focused programs around the state. This presentation will provide State Commissioners with tangible examples of best practices from the field.



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D. FORMAT:

Presenters will speak for a total of 30 minutes. The presentation will be followed by 15 minutes of questions, answers, and discussion with the State Commissioners. Public comment will be taken for an additional 15 minutes.

E. ATTACHMENT:

Why Invest in Infants and Toddlers? Making the Most of the Early Years of Life; Zero to Three; October 2005.

Presenters will speak for a total of 30 minutes. The presentation will be followed